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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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**Governor Dalrymple Proclaims Falls Prevention Awareness Day in North Dakota**  
*Department of Health Educating North Dakota Seniors about Preventing Falls*

BISMARCK, N.D. – Governor Jack Dalrymple has proclaimed September 22, 2013, the first day of the fall season, as Falls Prevention Awareness Day in North Dakota.

Falls are the leading cause of injury death for older Americans. Falls threaten seniors' safety and independence and generate enormous economic and personal costs. In 2012, there were 93 fall-related deaths to North Dakotans age 60 years and older.

“The Department of Health is working to raise awareness of the many preventive measures that can be taken to keep our seniors safe,” said State Health Officer Dr. Terry Dwelle. “Almost everyone has a family member or loved one who is 60 or older, so we encourage everyone to learn more about this important health issue.”

Every 15 seconds in the U.S., an older adult is seen in an emergency department for a fall-related injury. Falls are the leading cause of both fatal and nonfatal injuries for those ages 65 and older. The chances of falling and of being seriously injured in a fall increase with age.

“Falls are **not** a normal part of aging, and this day of awareness provides an opportunity to educate older adults and the community at large about how to reduce the risk of a fall,” said Diana Read, Injury/Violence Prevention Program director. “We encourage seniors and their families to take proactive steps to prevent falls and stay independent for as long as possible. Falls are often due to hazards that are easy to overlook, but easy to fix.”

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that one in three adults ages 65 or older falls, and two million are treated in an emergency department for fall-related injuries. Some of the unintended consequences of falls are people may suffer moderate to severe injuries such as lacerations, hip fractures or head trauma. These injuries can make it difficult to continue to live independently, as well as increase the risk of an early death. Falls are the most common cause of traumatic brain injury. Many people who have experienced a fall develop a fear of falling, which may cause them to limit their activities, therefore impacting their quality of life.

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The North Dakota Department of Health recommends these tips for seniors to prevent falls.

- **Get some exercise:** Lack of exercise can lead to weak legs, which increases the chance of falling. Exercise programs like Tai Chi and Stepping On can increase strength, as well as improve your balance, making falls less likely for aging adults.
- **Be mindful of medications:** Some medicines, or combinations of medicines, can have side effects like dizziness or drowsiness. This can make falls more likely. Having a doctor or pharmacist review all your medications can help reduce the chance of risky side effects and drug interactions.
- **Keep your vision sharp:** Poor vision can make it harder to get around safely. To help make sure you're seeing clearly, have your eyes checked every year and wear glasses or contact lenses with the right prescription strength.
- **Eliminate hazards at home.** About half of all falls happen at home. A home safety check can help identify fall hazards, like clutter and poor lighting that should be removed or changed. A home safety checklist is available from the North Dakota Department of Health.
- **Sign up for a falls prevention class if offered in your area.** There are many areas in North Dakota that are offering a class to build strength and balance as well as educate seniors on some of the hazards that may affect seniors.

For more information or to request a home safety checklist, please contact Diana Read, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4537 or e-mail at [dread@nd.gov](mailto:dread@nd.gov).

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PROCLAMATION  
**FALLS PREVENTION AWARENESS DAY**  
SEPTEMBER 22, 2013

**WHEREAS**, it is estimated that 14.4 percent of North Dakota citizens are 65 years of age or older; and

**WHEREAS**, it is estimated that one-third of seniors older than 65 and half of those 80 and older will fall each year; and

**WHEREAS**, according to the North Dakota Department of Health, falls are the leading cause of fatal injuries among North Dakotans 65 and older; and

**WHEREAS**, falls can lead to loss of mobility and functional independence; and

**WHEREAS**, the quality of life is improved for North Dakota seniors who remain healthy, active and independent; and

**WHEREAS**, injuries from falls are largely preventable; and

**WHEREAS**, evidence-based programs show promise in reducing falls and facilitating cost-effective interventions, such as comprehensive clinical assessments, exercise programs to improve balance and health, management of medications, correction of vision, and reduction of home hazards; and

**WHEREAS**, the North Dakota Department of Health and the North Dakota Department of Human Services are working to increase awareness of this issue, promote multi-disciplinary strategies to prevent falls, and encourage North Dakotans to take steps to protect those who are at increased risk of falling.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, as Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim September 22, 2013, **FALLS PREVENTION AWARENESS DAY** in the state of North Dakota.